

## **August 12, 2018 – Annunciation Episcopal Church**

### **Westley Hodges**

This week and recent week's readings have been a little on the doughy side... We have been hearing stories of Jesus feeding people utilizing bread and actually sitting down and sharing meals with folks. I do have to admit that my weakness is bread—I have never met a piece of bread that I didn't love—including our fabulous communion bread. But, all this talk about bread and food the past couple of weeks really got me thinking of everyone that goes without a sufficient amount of food to survive, and, people that have had their lives interrupted by natural disasters. And, since we are in the month of August, my mind is drawn to a significant time in my life when I experienced this first hand.

On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina arrived to New Orleans and South Mississippi. This superstorm caused more damage than any hurricane in history and will be a significant date in history for future generations. I was in my Senior year at Delta State University when this storm arrived. DSU is in Cleveland, but I was living in Greenville, MS because of my music director job at a Baptist Church.

Greenville is about 4 hours north of the Mississippi Gulf Coast and about 5 hours north of New Orleans where all my family lives. I remember this time like it was yesterday. I remember days before the storm approached watching the weather channel to see what the storm was going to do. I remember waking up the day before the storm hit to the weather channel saying it had strengthened overnight from a category 2 to a category 5. I remember calling my stubborn parents and telling them that they had to leave. My dad never leaves for storms... I remember my whole family driving up to Greenville, MS and staying with me. I remember them leaving two days later and not being able to speak to my mother for 3 whole weeks. I had no way of knowing if they were ok, if they made it home, or if their home was destroyed. I remember the first phone call three weeks after they arrived home. I remember.

A few months later, I moved to the Mississippi Gulf Coast and became the Director of Music at an Episcopal Church, an Episcopal Church that had been destroyed by Katrina. The church was meeting in a metal building called "Camp Coast Care" and the building housed volunteers that were coming from all over the

world to help and serve people that needed help rebuilding. Each Sunday these volunteers, usually about 100 a week, would stay and worship with us. Some Sundays I would have 20-30 guest singing in the choir—it was truly amazing.

I bring all this up to say, this is when I learned what “breaking bread” truly meant. Breaking bread is so much more than the literal, it is love, community, charity—and ultimately....it is God.

My parents told me stories about the three weeks they were cut off from the world. No power, no phones, the only thing they had was community. People that had gas stoves cooked feast, people that had generators went around and let everyone's refrigerator stay cold, letting them run for about an hour a day. People would just walk in your yard and help you clean up the tree limbs and debris. I have heard people say that they have felt closer to God doing these hard times than ever before. And, I think that is because we all are a reflection of God, we all have God in us, and if we all take the time to see other human beings, more people would experience God on earth.

When Jesus spoke to people and said that he was the bread of life...He meant... that just as a meal aids you in your life each day, he will give you eternal life. You see, the Trinity is a tricky conversation, but it is all about relationships. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—you can't have any of those without the other, because they are all present within one another. But, we are part of the Trinity. God is with us, within us, and that means that we are part of the Trinity and a reflection of God.

In the second reading today, we hear some great things that we all need to work harder on, like, let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. Also, be kind to one another. And, so many other things that would help us. I feel we are at a point in time where everyone just wants to be seen for what makes them different. And, in my personal opinion, this is very simple.

When you see the homeless person on the street, before you just say I don't have anything—say hello.

When our black friends are screaming to be seen and fighting for Black Lives Matter, support them.

When the women of this world are fighting for their safety against sexual abusers, listen to them.

When a trans person asks you to use their preferred pronouns, use them.

I could go on, but I think when we realize that the bread of life is within us and we have the power to distribute it by simply smiling at someone, saying hello, or simply by not turning our heads to the poor, we will see that the light of Jesus will continue to shine in this world. We have that power.

Be kind.

Be loving.

Be a reflection of God.

Amen